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Senate

The Senate met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MICHAEL F. BENNET, a Senator from the State of Colorado.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

From the rising of the Sun to its setting, O God, Your Name is great among the nations. Thank You for the wonder of Your grace. Today, help our Senators to be energized by Your amazing grace. May this favor enhance their talents and impart to them the wisdom to choose the right path. As they walk on the road that glorifies You, help them to use their individual abilities to supplement the talents of their colleagues, producing a bipartisan harvest of accomplishments. May they commit themselves this day to Your care, for You are their mighty rock and fortress. Lord, lead and guide them so Your Name will be honored. We pray in the Redeemer's Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MICHAEL F. BENNET led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, February 4, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable MICHAEL F. BENNET, a Senator from the State of Colorado, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BENNET thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Hawaii.

SCHEDULE

Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, today the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1, the Economic Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and Senators will offer and debate amendments to the bill. Rollcall votes are expected to occur this afternoon.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

ECONOMIC STIMULUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, according to news reports, President Obama called congressional Democrats down to the White House the other night to talk about treating this bill more like a stimulus and less like a free-for-all. I commend him for the effort, and I appreciate it. But after yesterday, it looks like they might need a little stronger medicine.

The day after meeting with President Obama, Democrats offered several amendments, and every single one of them added to the total cost of what is already nearly a \$1 trillion spending bill—\$11 billion here, \$25 billion there, another \$6 billion somewhere else. In other words, real money. By the end of

the first day of debate, the Democrats had added more than \$41 billion to a bill that just about everybody else in America already thought was way too large.

On this side, Republicans offered some amendments too. All but one of them, however, sought to reduce the cost to the taxpayer. The President has tried to set some priorities. Unfortunately, Democrats keep throwing more money on top of an already incredibly bloated bill. At some point, we are going to have to learn to say no. If we are going to help the economy, we need to get hold of this bill. Making it bigger isn't the answer.

The President seems to recognize the problem. Last night, he repeated his call for discipline and restraint in a letter from OMB Director Peter Orszag. Its message was clear: The Nation is in a financial crisis and this bill should be stripped of everything that doesn't aim to solve the crisis. As Mr. Orszag put it:

We need to recognize that this recovery and reinvestment plan is an extraordinary response to an extraordinary crisis. It should not be seen as an opportunity to abandon the fiscal discipline that we owe each and every taxpayer in spending their money and in keeping the United States strong in a global, interdependent economy.

This bill needs to be cut down, and we should start with permanent spending increases, which only increase the deficit from here on out. This is a permanent spending bill that has been slipped into a bill that was supposed to be timely, temporary, and targeted. Many of these additions may be very worthwhile, but they still don't belong in a stimulus bill. So the first thing we need to do is to make a distinction between what grows the economy and what doesn't. Anything that doesn't ought to be cut out. That is what the President said Monday night, that is what he repeated last night; that we need to be, "trimming out things that aren't relevant to putting people back

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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